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Sierra Mountain Historic Auto Tour

Taylor Ranger District
Sierra National Forest



United States
Department of
Agriculture

PREPARED BY
Forest
Service

Southwestern
Region

Railroad Logging

Take a peek into an exciting era of northwestern New Mexico's past. Although railroad logging in the Zuni Mountains lasted only some 50 years (1892-1942), it left distinctive marks on the landscape, economy, and people of the area. Timber harvesting, mining, and grazing of cattle and sheep played an important role in the development of surrounding communities.



Keith Clawson



Cecil Moore

Recollections

Many area residents remember those days. Lee Hassell's father was a logger. "We lived at the end of the track in Foster Canyon," said Lee. "My friends and I used to get excited when we heard the trains coming because it meant there would be a lot of action soon when the logs were loaded."

Even children living in lumber camps didn't escape days spent in the one-room school house. "I remember the sounds of the horses walking on rocky ground and the loggers chatting and shouting in the woods. The teacher at our school house was sometimes surprised at the language we picked up from those loggers!" says Lee.



Lee Hassell

James O. Sneddon



Stanley Lewis

James O. Sneddon

In 1924, Stanley Lewis was a boy of six. He lived in the Breece Lumber Camp where his father was a locomotive fireman. "Most of the men worked for \$2.50 a day. We lived in a company house and used company money at the company store," he recalled.

His mother Blanche remembers gathering firewood each day in a big washtub, scrubbing the chimneys blackened by coal oil lamps and tending her eight children. "I would sew dresses for neighbor women for seventy-five cents a dress," she reminisces.



Blanche Lewis

James O. Sneddon

A few times, Stanley's father invited him to ride on the train. "It was quite thrilling to see the countryside go by. I don't know how fast we were going, but it seemed fast to me," Stanley said.

History

The main line of the railroad was constructed along the route of Interstate 40. The Atlantic and Pacific Line, which later became the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe (ATS&F), provided a system to transport logs to Eastern markets. Large-scale timber cutting in the Zuni began in 1901 by the American Lumber Company, although the first attempt at railroad logging was in 1892 by the Mitchell Brothers. The American Lumber Company ceased operations in 1913.

After World War I, logging resumed under different owners. McGaffey Company had a logging operation in the western portion of the Zuni Mountains. In 1920, the logging center was moved to Bluewater Lake with George E. Breece Lumber Company as the major company.

Railroad logging reached its peak in 1908 when six locomotives and 160 logging cars ran on 55 miles of track. More than 500 men worked the line daily, sending 30 to 40 carloads of pine logs to the mill in Albuquerque. Annual timber cut varied between 35 million and 50 million board-feet a year. In the 1930s, truck logging began in earnest and railroad logging declined. By 1942, railroad logging had ended and most of the commercial timber had been harvested.

Currently, the Mt. Taylor District of the Cibola National Forest annually harvests six to eight million board-feet of timber from 550,000 acres it manages in the Zuni Mountains and on Mt. Taylor.



Keith Clawson



Forest Service

Logging Techniques

Logging relied heavily on human- and horse-power to move logs. Trees were felled by hand with two-man saws and skidded to the railroad by big wheels, bummers (low-wheeled trucks), sleds, and eight-wheeled wagons drawn by teams of horses. Although horses were used to load logs onto rail cars in the early days, they were soon replaced with steam loaders or "steam donkeys." Since horses could skid logs only limited distances, railroad spurs were built in nearly every tributary drainage along the main line. Track-laying or section crews

were often Navajos or Hispanics who could lay about a half mile of track daily with the help of a locomotive.

Locomotives

Main line locomotives purchased or leased from AT&SF were used along with specialized logging locomotives for use on steep logging spurs on light rail. The Shay-g geared locomotive proved to be one of the most effective of the specialized locomotives. Lee Hassell remembers Shay engines as real workhorses. "The old Shays were gear-driven engines with vertical pistons and a longitudinal crankshaft running low on the right side. It gave them power by gearing." The Climax locomotive was also effective for logging in the mountains.



Keith Clawson



James O. Sneddon

These narrow-gauge locomotives were used beginning in 1892.

Road Number	Type	Manufacturer	History
No data	2-T Shay	Lima Locomotive Lima, OH	Damaged in wreck in 1892.
212	2-T Shay	Lima	Shipped to Mexico in 1908.

These standard-gauge locomotives were used for logging in the Zuni Mountains between 1903-1917:

Road Number	Type	Manufacturer	History
2	No data	No data	Purchased from dealer in 1903. Damaged in wreck in 1907.
4	4-6-0	No data	Purchased from dealer in 1902.
6	2-8-0	No data	Purchased from Hicks Locomotive & Car Works in 1905.
8	2-T Climax	Climax Mfg. Co. Corry, PA	New in 1906. Retired in 1923.
10	3-T Shay	Lima	New. Disposition unknown.
12	2-8-0	Baldwin Locomotive Philadelphia, PA	New. Sold in 1920.
3	3-T Shay	Lima	New. Disposition unknown.
096	4-4-0	Manchester Locomotive Manchester, NH	Purchased from AT&SF in 1912.
261	4-6-0	Schenectady Locomotive Schnectady, NY	Purchased from AT&SF in 1912.
271	4-6-0	Schnectady	Purchased from AT&SF in 1916.
2303	2-8-0	Hinkley Locomotive Boston, MA	Leased from AT&SF 1906-1908.

Zuni Mountain Historic Auto Tour

In the mid-1920s when Breece Lumber Company moved its center of operations to Grants, the town was a small settlement of 350 to 400 people with a trading post, post office, and some family residences around the train station. When the lumber company moved in, the population increased to around 4,000.

The Zuni Mountain Historic Auto Tour begins at the Museum of Mining in Grants. Eighteen stops at points of interest along the 60-mile route (about a half-day trip) wind through scenic Zuni Canyon into Agua Fria Valley, to the historic town of Sawyer, and loop back to Grants by way of Bluewater Lake. This route is suitable for mountain biking also.

From the Museum of Mining, follow Santa Fe Avenue west to State Road 53, cross over the bridge that leads over Interstate 40, and turn right onto Zuni Canyon Road. As you cross the bridge, look to your left to see the remodeled locomotive roundhouse, which is now the Diamond-G Hardware Store. Some of the original company houses are still standing just to the east of the hardware store. Shortly after you enter Zuni Canyon, begin looking on either side of the road for the locomotive-shaped, numbered signposts leading the way along the auto tour.

Since none of the roads on the auto tour are paved, they are unsuitable for motor homes, fifth-wheelers and trailers. There is no gasoline or water available on the tour. Check with the Museum of Mining or the Mt. Taylor Ranger District office in Grants before starting on the tour in inclement weather. Some of the tour passes through private land. Please respect landowners' boundaries. Do not disturb railroad trestles, cabin sites, and other historic remains. When you explore on foot, remember this is rattlesnake country.

Starting Point - Museum of Mining - Grants

Stop 1 - Milepost 5.6 - Cibola National Forest Boundary

Named after Zuni Indian Pueblo 50 miles west, the Zuni Mountains have been used by various Native American groups for thousands of years. Mexican and Spanish explorers also passed through the Zunis. Cattle and sheep ranchers continue to use the mountains for grazing.

Stop 2 - Milepost 9.7 - Log Chute

On your left, on the south side of Zuni Canyon is a log chute where pine logs were dropped down to waiting railroad cars. Horses and, later, gasoline tractors dragged logs to the edge of the mesa. Since many of the valuable logs were damaged as they tumbled down the chute, a cable system was later developed to move them down the mountain.

Stop 3 - Milepost 11.1 - Malpais Spring

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Stop 3 - Milepost 11.1 - Malpais Spring

In the late 1920s, Breece Lumber Company had a camp near the spring in this lava flow. Since many of the

workers and their families lived in transportable "railroad houses" or in tents, there are few remains of rock or log structures at this site. If you walk southwest from the junctions of Roads 49 and 447 through the meadow, you may find evidence of the channel cut through the lava rock. This channel was for a pipeline from the spring that lies to the west. As you proceed toward Stop 4, the railroad bed on your right is the mound of reddish soil at the base of the hill.

Stop 4 - Milepost 13.5 - Bridge 17

A .3-mile walk down the existing road that runs northwest and then northeast from the sign will bring you to Bridge 17 at La Jara. This was the 17th bridge from Grants. This bridge illustrates techniques of trestle construction similar to those in use today, using squared beams, not logs, as timber supports. Earlier railroad logging bridges had been built in a cribwork style, which used many more logs per trestle.



James O. Smeddon

Stop 5 - Milepost 16.7 - "Set Out Tracks"

A wide variety of railroad locomotives were used in the Zuni Mountains. Equipment on some routes had to conform to main line standards. Once present at this site, but no longer visible, were "set out tracks" where the smaller Shay or Climax-type engines coming from the woods could be replaced by the main line locomotives. Also from this locale, railroad grades were built southeast toward Paxton and Agua Fria Springs and westward up Agua Fria Valley toward Valle Largo.

Stop 6 - Milepost 19.5 - Plantation

Stands of pine in the Zuni Mountains were seriously depleted by unregulated logging practices of long ago. Today, timber harvesting is carefully regulated. Between 1979 and 1989, the Forest Service planted 8,900 acres of ponderosa pine seedlings. Seedlings in this area were planted in 1984.

Stop 7 - Milepost 20.3 - Cold Springs

Cold Springs, located in the valley northeast of the old buildings, had the coldest water anywhere in the Zuni Mountains. The spot was a popular stopover for people from the logging town of Sawyer, further up Agua Fria Valley. Since these old buildings are on private land, please respect the landowner's rights.

Stop 8 - Milepost 23.3 - Dry Land Farming

The Zuni Mountains had a wetter climate in the past, according to historical records. Wet meadows produced natural hay, which loggers harvested for their horses. There was also some dry-land farming of oats, barley, potatoes, and other crops. Potatoes could be sold to the Bond-Sargent store

in Grants for 75 cents per 100 pounds. Enterprising farmers also raised chickens to sell to the logging camps. Sagebrush and rabbitbrush have since invaded the once fertile grasslands.

Stop 9 - Milepost 24.8 - Watershed Divide

The Continental Divide (elevation 9,089 feet) is near this point on Oso Ridge to the southwest. Water flows east to the Atlantic Ocean, and west to the Pacific.

Stop 10 - Milepost 26.9 - Geology of the Zuni Mountains

The Zuni Mountains were created by a large, elongated dome of sedimentary rock that pushed up as the earth's surface shifted. Layers of alternating sandstone and shale were eroded through the years. Evidence of considerable volcanic activity can be found at the eastern end of the mountains.

Stop 11 - Milepost 29.6 - Camp 9

The American Lumber Company had 10 numbered camps. Camp 9 was at this spot. There were several cabins, a well house, a few barns and other structures. Each camp was used for only a couple of years.



Cecil Moore

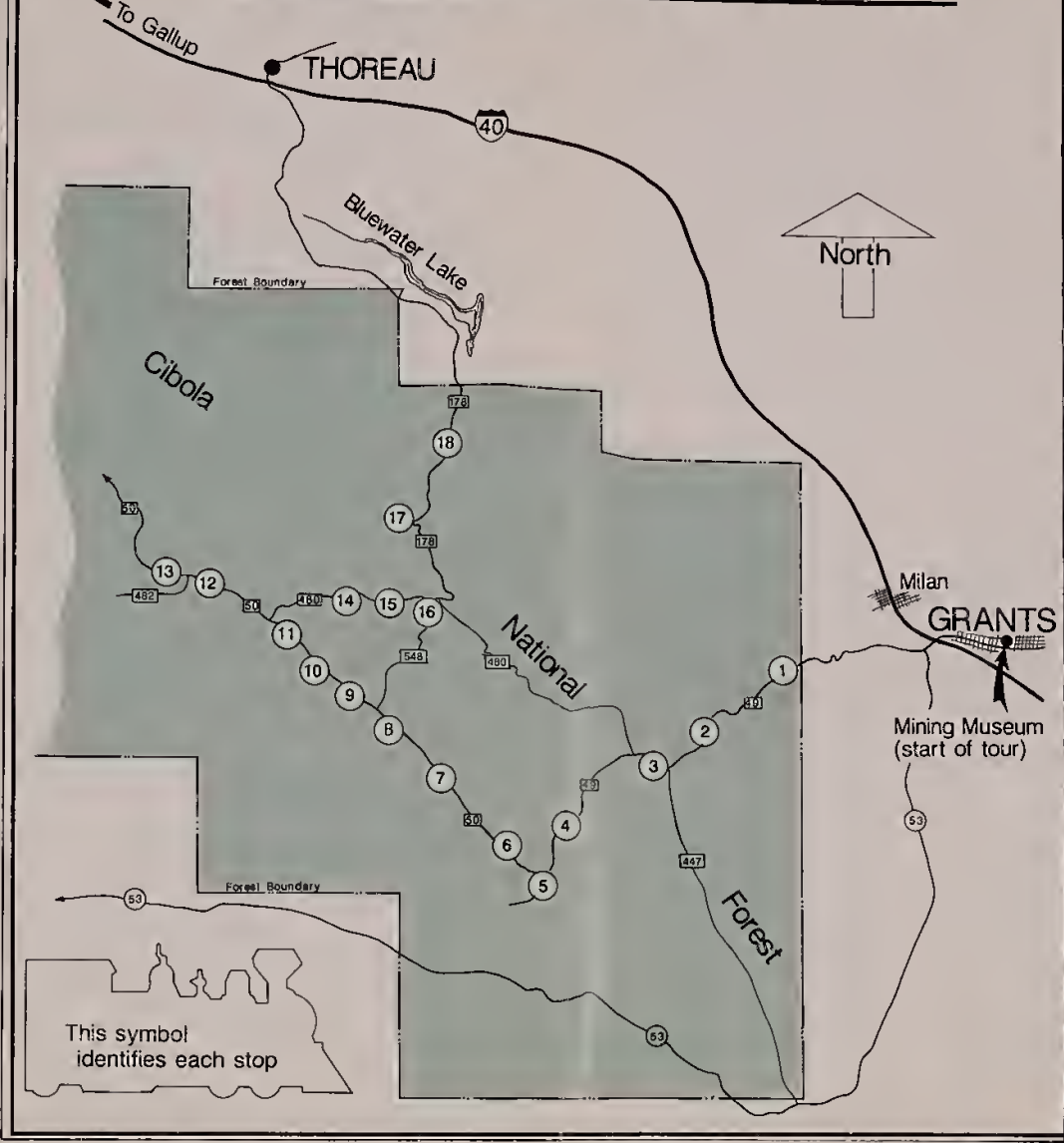
Stop 12 - Milepost 30.5 - Sawyer

The town of Sawyer was just north of the place where you are now. You are welcome to cross the fence and explore. Sawyer was the main logging camp from 1909 to 1921. About 200 people, including 60 children, lived at Sawyer. Residents walked to the general store for supplies. Children did chores for their parents, played, or attended the small Sawyer school. There was a boarding house for single men and company-built housing for families. The remains of hogans and sweatshouses suggest that Navajo workers also lived at Sawyer. Many of the buildings were hauled away when Breece moved the main logging camp to Bluewater Lake.

Stop 13 - Milepost 31.0 - Ponderosa Pine Forest

Between 1892 and 1942, loggers cut about 800 million board-feet of timber from the Zuni Mountains. This stand of mature ponderosa pine is a remnant of the virgin timber stands that once covered the Zunis above 7,000 feet.

ZUNI MOUNTAIN HISTORIC AUTO TOUR



From this point, retrace your path. Go back two miles on Forest Road 50 and take the left-hand turn onto FR 480. The tour continues on FR 480 and FR 178 to Interstate 40.

Stop 14 - Milepost 36.3 - Quartz Hill

Ancient geologic formations of Precambrian granite contain a vein of quartz in the area. You are looking at some of the oldest rock visible in the Zuni Mountains.

Stop 15 - Milepost 38.2 - Post Office Flat

A small cabin in this mountain meadow served as a post office for loggers, farmers, and ranchers in the vicinity. When the logging camp moved, so did the post office. These temporary post offices never had any official status with the U.S. Postal Service. They were just a convenient mail stop.

Stop 16 - Milepost 39.9 - Diener Canyon Millsite

In the 1930s, an open-pit copper mine was developed in this area. After the high-grade was extracted, the mining of the low-grade ore proved unprofitable due to shipping distances.

Stop 17 - Milepost 42.2 - Mirabal Mines

In 1918, Moise Mirabal began locating mining claims. Seeing his good fortune, other mining companies moved into the area. One thousand tons of fluorspar were mined between 1918 and 1944. Fluorspar is used as a flux in making open-hearth steel. It is also used for manufacturing opal glass and enamels. Some silver and copper were also mined here.

Stop 18 - Milepost 45.2 - Bluewater Creek

Bluewater Creek is the principal source of water for Bluewater Lake and also a valuable riparian habitat for plants and wildlife. Early clearcutting, overgrazing, and climatic fluctuations have seriously affected this water supply.

In 1971, the long-standing grazing reservations and commitments were ended in the Bluewater Creek watershed. In recent years, the Forest Service has invested time and resources to improve the riparian habitat along the streamside and establish better grazing management practices. Volunteers have helped plant trees, reseed and install fish structures. Through natural seeding and artificial introduction of vegetation, Bluewater Creek is becoming attractive to trout and beaver.

End of Auto Tour

From Stop 18, follow FR 178 for 16 miles to the I-40 exit at Thoreau. To return to Grants, continue east on I-40 for 28 miles.

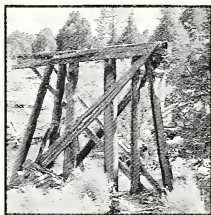


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Other Attractions: One-day Tours from Grants

Museum of Mining - Tour an exact replica of a real uranium mine. Tour guides are former uranium miners. Admission: \$2 (Ages 9-59), \$1.50 (60+), 8 and under are free. Located at 100 Iron Street; Grants, NM 87020; (505) 287-4802.

El Malpais National Monument - 114,000 acres of "Frozen Fire" containing some of the most awesome lava and sandstone formations on earth. Located 10 miles south of Grants via I-40 and NM 117.

El Malpais National Conservation Area - See natural wonders such as La Ventana Arch and 30 cinder cones in the Chain of Craters in the 262,000 acres managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Information center open 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 7 days a week, located at 620 E. Santa Fe Avenue; Grants, NM 87020; (505) 285-5406.

Ice Caves and Giant Bandera Crater - Open to the public. Located 26 miles southwest of Grants via NM 53.

El Morro National Monument - Carvings and messages were left by conquistadores and other travelers on the famous "Inscription Rock," located 43 miles west of Grants via NM 53.

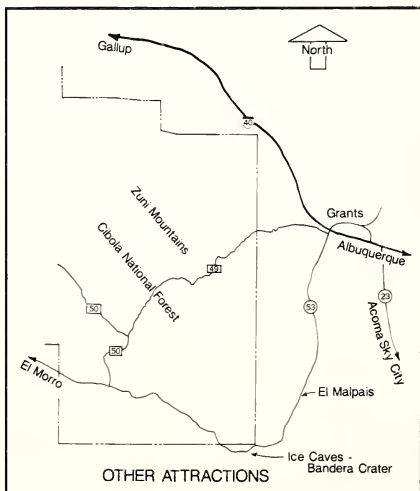
Acoma Pueblo - Known as "Sky City," the pueblo is the oldest continually inhabited city in the United States. Located 32 miles southeast of Grants via I-40 and NM 23.

Laguna Pueblo - This majestic pueblo is visible from I-40, the focal point being the shimmering San Jose de Laguna Mission, 36 miles east of Grants via I-40, exit 108.

Mt. Taylor - More than 11,000 feet of towering ponderosa pines, with camping, hiking, skiing, and snowmobiling available. Located 15 miles northeast of Grants via NM 547.

Bluewater State Park - Fishing, camping, boating and hiking are just some of the popular pastimes at this versatile recreation spot. Located 25 miles southwest of Grants via I-40 and NM 412.

Chaco Canyon - Located on NM 509 80 miles northwest of Grants.

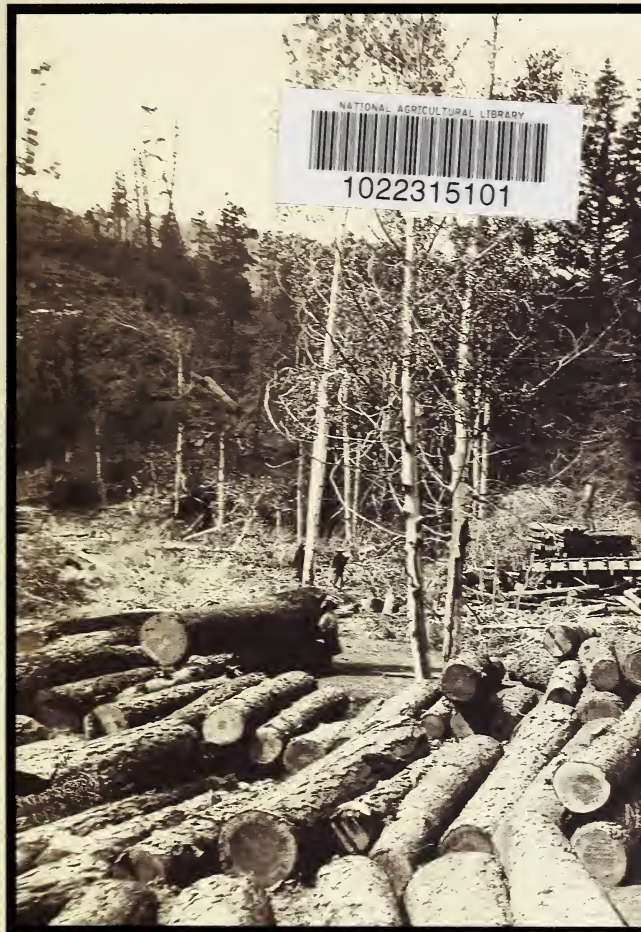


For further information about these sites or other attractions in the area, please contact the Greater Grants Chamber of Commerce; P.O. Box 297; Grants, NM 87020; (505) 287-4802.

Much of the information in this brochure was obtained from local residents, Stan and Jackie Hayton, Lee Hassell, Stanley and Blanche Lewis, Marvel Prestridge, Ruby Keeney, and many others who contributed first-hand knowledge of the logging industry in the Grants area.

Brochure text written by Sharon Sneddon, John Caffrey, and Linda Popelish. Layout and design by James Sneddon and Linda Popelish.

From the collection of Keith Clawson



Private contributors to the Zuni Mountain Historic Auto Tour include: Bates Lumber Company of Albuquerque, Homestake Mining Company, Greater Grants Chamber of Commerce, and Cibola Convention and Marketing Bureau.

For more information, you may enjoy reading "Zuni Mountain Railroads, Cibola National Forest," by Vernon J. Glover and Joseph P. Hereford, Jr. The publication is for sale at Mt. Taylor Ranger District; 1800 Lobo Canyon Road; Grants, NM 87020.

